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No visit shall be made to contagious cases.

Home visits, visits to hospital or dispensary, must be noted on the nurse's record copy. The form must then be submitted to the medical inspector who will sign it if the evidence is satisfactory.

Evidence that a child is under medical care is sufficient for terminating the case.

*Meetings.*—Nurses must report regularly, in person, at such times as may be designated, to the Superintendent of Nurses.

*(To be continued)*

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## LOCOMOTOR ATAXIA JOE

### "A HUMAN DOCUMENT FOUNDED ON FACTS"

BY MARJORIE ALICE WATT

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#### I

JOE BROWN stood before the desk of the supervising nurse in one of the New York city hospitals. He had been a patient for nearly seven years. To-day he was going to leave—never to return, he hoped. He was still weak, standing there on his crutch and cane. His disease was an incurable one of locomotor ataxia, and—well, the medical professors who paid weekly visits to the hospital pronounced him a hopeless case. Everything that these men of science could do had been done for Joe, but to no avail.

Tremblingly he stood, his head and shoulders drooped, his pale, thin face expressionless. He was given a suit of clothes, for the wearing apparel he wore when he was first admitted was moth-eaten and destroyed. His pajamas and jacket were discarded for a blue serge of cheap material. His cotton shirt was replaced by a coarse but warm sweater, which came well up around his thin neck. His soft felt slippers were left behind. His feet were shod with a strong, second-hand pair of Congress shoes—all cast-off wearing apparel of patients who had already died and disappeared beyond the Great Divide.

For over six long years this barren citadel of gray stone had been his abiding place. Day in, day out, year in, year out, it had been the same routine.

"Good-by, Joe," the nurse said, sympathetically. "I hope you will take good care of yourself, and remember you are not strong now!" Joe had known this nurse when she first began as a probationer, then

rose from junior to senior in rapid succession, until she became appointed supervisor of the ward. She took a great liking to Joe and was always very kind to him, for he did not have any relatives or friends call to see him—he was alone in the world. He appreciated her kindness, and shortly before his departure he took her into his confidence and revealed to her the story of his miserable, misspent life. She was shocked, but still she pitied him.

Joe hesitated, then placed his limp hand in that of hers. He moistened his lips and his face worked spasmodically, but no sound came from his throat.

Slowly, like one under the influence of an opiate, he turned his face toward the door, which had been more of a home to him than a hospital for so many years. Even then he hesitated. He did not know where to go when he did go out. The doctors and nurses did not wish him to go, but he could not heed them—he was obdurate.

Down the long narrow path to the landing, where he met the little steam launch which conveyed him to the Manhattan side, he wandered weakly on his crutch and cane. His pace was slow and his head was not lifted. There was a haunted look in his downcast eyes.

## II

It was late in the afternoon when he entered a small village over in Long Island. The changes since he had last been there were unfamiliar, but here everything had been as he remembered it. This had been his birthplace, his home, until the wildness within his soul, stirred to fury by the aid of evil associates, had left him behind prison bars.

For some years previous to his downfall Joe was employed in a newspaper office as compositor. He became shiftless, and he could be seen frequently attending the racetracks and poolrooms—once too often he neglected his work. The superintendent soon tired of him. He placed a note in his last pay envelope, which read: "Joseph Brown, your services are no longer required from this date. This order is imperative.—T. F. S."

He gradually went from bad to worse after his dismissal, and before he knew whither led the course he was treading, he became caught in the clutches of the law. He was arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to ten years in Sing Sing prison.

His poor, broken-hearted mother visited him during his detention awaiting trial. He had been glad to see her for one reason only, and that was to get money with which to hire a lawyer to defend him. Without complaining she mortgaged her little cottage that she might

have him back. She knew his wildness. In her rapidly sinking heart she feared the accusations against him, and yet, worthless outlaw though he might be, he was her only boy—her only living son. Later, when he had begun his long term of imprisonment, she had visited him and brought him such delicacies as the prison rules would permit, and even small sums of money, saved at the price of starvation of her emaciated little body.

His selfish, stunted brain did not tell him that she had aged with cruel rapidity since his disgrace. Even when she failed to appear on the regular monthly visitation days and sent him a brief note of cheer, every word of which had taken a drop of blood from her weak heart, he had mentally resented her neglect and had written her a harsh letter of upbraiding.

And then they told him that she was dead. His dogged stolidness kept back the tears, and his thoughts dwelt more bitterly upon the cessation of the creature comforts than upon the truth that he had killed his mother by his viciousness. What was his reward? In the last two of the ten years he was taken sick and became bedridden. In less than a month his power of locomotion had nearly vanished. After his prison term expired he was admitted to the charity hospital.

### III

As in a trance he turned down a rutted side street and into a yard of an old-fashioned house. Half-way up the walk he stopped with a sharp intake of breath. For the first time since he had been confined in prison and hospital, his mind seemed to be reaching out, throbbing, endeavoring to comprehend.

Why should he go to this house? Only strangers were within. When he had last gone forth it was with the springy step of recklessness. Then where did he land? Three stages—prison, hospital and cripple. The fourth stage is yet to come.

Why did he not heed his mother's warning? Not he! What were his answers? He would shake her off roughly, he would curse and abruptly leave the table, kicking over the chairs by way of emphasis.

He had not tasted of food since early morning, yet he was not hungry.

Limping on his crutch and cane, he turned back to the main street. He hobbled on past the village post-office, under the tall arching elms with limbs bared by the early winter winds. He could not tell where he was going, or why, yet there was hesitancy in his advance until he reached the village cemetery. He paused only for a moment, passed

through the gate and down the winding driveway. His eyes, no longer downcast, were roving from headstone to headstone. In their depths, for the first time that day, shone expression—a look of combined eagerness and haunting fear. Down one path and up another he went, but the name he looked for he did not find. He was certain that no stone had escaped him, yet he started over again, traversing the same pathways, examining the same headstones.

The cold gray of the day's close settled about him, and it was with difficulty that he deciphered the names on the marble slabs. His second quest ended—and still he had not found the object of his search.

Suddenly something seemed to break within him. The fog raised from his brain and he swayed unsteadily.

Three or four stumbling steps were required before he regained his balance, and then came the tears, swift and blinding.

A sob shook his frame, then another, and another. A few steps and his crutch struck on an obliterated mound. He did not try to save himself, but fell at full length on the dead tufted grass.

"Mother!" he cried, "I want you, I want you!"

It was the call of a child, cognizant of its puny weakness, seeking the loving arm of the mother who always guarded it from harm. And then the sobbing ceased. A strange, unknown peace possessed him.

. . . . .

There they found him the next day. No one knew him, or, knowing him in other days, no one connected the body of that man in the prime of life, but gray-haired and crippled, with the fiery dare-devil youth of nearly twenty years ago. So the town furnished the cheap pine coffin in which they placed him, and he was buried without ceremony or song in a pauper's grave—the fourth and last stage.

As the venerable old town-clerk made the entry in the record book, he glanced musingly at the preceding lines.

"Nine years since we had to bury a pauper," he commented to himself. "Yes, that's right," he added, as his begrimed forefinger traced the date line.

"Let me see! Oh, yes, that was Nellie Brown. Hers was number fifteen. This unknown goes alongside of her—number sixteen."

Locomotor Ataxia Joe had found his mother.

NOTE.—Locomotor Ataxia, a dreaded nervous disease, which renders the patient almost helpless in the pedal extremities, and is venereal in origin. The progress of the disease can be checked, but a case has never been known to have been completely cured.

M. A. W.